

Hey Shorebird Enthusiasts!

Spring seems to have sprung here in Delaware with sun shining and 60+ degree days. All of this nice weather, finally, is making me anxious for May and the return of our favorite shorebirds!

And, yes, we will continue monitoring shorebirds this year by capturing the birds to see how well they are putting on weight and applying coded leg flags. We will also be spending our time searching for those flags which is a tremendously fun experience for those of you who haven't made it out yet. We do try to get everyone into Mispillion Harbor (the best place to do scans for flagged birds) at least once. It is truly an amazing experience!

Speaking of Mispillion Harbor, it may look a little bit different this year. Last summer we identified a significant breach at the north end of the north breakwater (behind Back Beach) and several Divisions within our Department were able to come together along with the Army Corps of Engineers to replenish sand at that beach. Since then there have been more significant storms and erosion so our efforts may have delayed the total loss of that beach! It is recognized that that was only a stop-gap until we can identify a plan of action and funding for direct protection of the habitat at this most important site. But hopefully, shorebirds will find more and better habitat there this year!

Finally, the Red Knot population in Tierra del Fuego over the winter was about the same as in previous years so the good news is there was no apparent population decline. The bad news is we have yet to see a major up-tick in the population. That is why the monitoring work we do is so important.

Your help is important...

The data collected during our monitoring efforts is as important now as it has ever been. In 2007 Red Knots were designated as a "Candidate" species under the USFWS's Endangered Species Act. At the time, it was given a priority level of 6. In 2008, its priority level was upgraded to a level 3, the highest a migratory species can attain. This puts the Red Knot that much closer to being designated as Threatened or Endangered. It is with the strong scientific data you helped to collect that Red Knots have been recognized to be in such peril. In addition, we are in the process of developing a model that uses both Red Knot and horseshoe crab monitoring data to inform management decisions regarding horseshoe crab harvests. So the high quality of data we've collected in previous years needs to continue as we develop and test this new model. We are also continuing to work towards additional conservation measures in Delaware to further protect the birds and provide what they need including land acquisition and habitat improvements.

All of the work conducted and data collected by the volunteers of the DE Shorebird Project is critical to furthering our understanding of Red Knots and other shorebirds that migrate through the Bay in the spring. I am hopeful you will be interested in helping out by volunteering with the Delaware Shorebird Project this year. The success of this project and shorebird conservation in Delaware depends heavily on your help during the short migratory period. We need people to help on processing teams, to help resight individually marked birds, and to help with other daily aspects of the project. Basically, there is something for volunteers of all skill

levels and abilities to do! If this sounds like a good time and something you would like to do, please become involved!

Details...

We have again secured a house in Slaughter Beach as a base of operations during the field season and will be there from May 5 through June 5. Limited space is available so please let me know if you would like to stay overnight so we can work to accommodate you. We work 7 days a week to collect all of the data needed during the short migratory period so there is always something to do at a time that will fit with your schedule. We do ask that you try to contribute at least 3 to 4 days to the effort. This amount of time is intended to expose you to all aspects of the project and give you an opportunity to develop your skills in resighting and banding team work. Plus, it's just plain fun!

I am happy that my talented team leaders Gregory Breese (USFWS) and Jean Woods (Delaware Museum of Natural History) will be assisting with scheduling volunteers and updating volunteers on team activities in addition to the great team leadership work they do every year! Hopefully we, collectively, can come close to providing you as much support as my previous volunteer coordinators (Annie Jacobs and Tori Withington) did.

We will not be conducting pre-season volunteer training again this year. Our online training modules are being updated and I will let you know when they have been finalized. We will have a short orientation when you arrive to the field station in Slaughter Beach but most of the training will be in the field when we are actually collecting data. What better way to learn than with birds on the shore or in the hand!

What to do now...

- Plan to come to the Bay! Let me know when you plan to help out. I am looking to have a team of about 10-15 volunteers per day.
- Brush up on your species ID's
- Review the training modules once the updated versions are available.
- Watch for pre-season requests for help forming bands and flags (I know Jean has some plans already!).

Contacts...

If you have a question and need more information or to let us know when you will be able to help:

- **Before 1 May** you can contact me directly at:
Kevin.kalasz@state.de.us or (302)653-2880.
- **After 1 May** you can reach the team at:
desshorebirds@gmail.com (cell number will be sent out soon!)

I hope to hear from you and look forward to seeing you in May!

Kevin Kalasz

DE Shorebird Project Coordinator

<http://www.fw.delaware.gov/shorebirds/>